

## MICHIGAN ELECTION LAW (EXCERPT)

### Act 116 of 1954

#### CHAPTER XXII

#### INITIATIVE AND REFERENDUM

##### **168.471 Petitions proposing constitutional amendments; filing.**

Sec. 471. Petitions under section 2 of article XII of the state constitution of 1963 proposing an amendment to the constitution shall be filed with the secretary of state at least 120 days before the election at which the proposed amendment is to be voted upon. Initiative petitions under section 9 of article II of the state constitution of 1963 shall be filed with the secretary of state at least 160 days before the election at which the proposed law is to be voted upon. Referendum petitions under section 9 of article II of the state constitution of 1963 shall be filed with the secretary of state not more than 90 days following the final adjournment of the legislative session at which the law that is the subject of the referendum was enacted.

**History:** 1954, Act 116, Eff. June 1, 1955;—Am. 1963, 2nd Ex. Sess., Act 9, Imd. Eff. Dec. 27, 1963;—Am. 1999, Act 219, Eff. Mar. 10, 2000.

**Popular name:** Election Code

##### **168.472 Initiative petitions; filing.**

Sec. 472. Petitions to initiate legislation shall be filed with the secretary of state not less than 10 days before the beginning of a session of the legislature.

**History:** 1954, Act 116, Eff. June 1, 1955.

**Constitutionality:** The requirements of this section constitute an unnecessary and unreasonable restraint on the constitutional right to initiate legislation, as provided for by Const 1963, art 2, § 9. *Wolverine Golf Club v Secretary of State*, 384 Mich 461; 185 NW2d 392 (1971).

**Popular name:** Election Code

##### **168.472a Presumption as to signature on petition.**

Sec. 472a. It shall be rebuttably presumed that the signature on a petition that proposes an amendment to the constitution or is to initiate legislation, is stale and void if the signature was made more than 180 days before the petition was filed with the office of the secretary of state.

**History:** Add. 1973, Act 24, Imd. Eff. June 12, 1973;—Am. 1973, Act 112, Imd. Eff. Aug. 19, 1973;—Am. 1999, Act 219, Eff. Mar. 10, 2000.

**Popular name:** Election Code

##### **168.473 Referendum petitions; filing.**

Sec. 473. Referendum petitions shall be presented to and filed with the secretary of state within 90 days after the final adjournment of the legislature.

**History:** 1954, Act 116, Eff. June 1, 1955.

**Popular name:** Election Code

##### **168.473b Filing petition after November election.**

Sec. 473b. Signatures on a petition to propose an amendment to the state constitution of 1963 or a petition to initiate legislation collected prior to a November general election at which a governor is elected shall not be filed after the date of that November general election.

**History:** Add. 1999, Act 219, Eff. Mar. 10, 2000.

**Popular name:** Election Code

##### **168.474 Board of state canvassers; duties; statement of purpose of proposed constitutional amendment.**

Sec. 474. Wherever the phrases “the state officer authorized by law” or “the person authorized by law”, are used in section 9 of article 2 or section 2 of article 12 of the constitution of this state, such phrases shall mean and have reference to the board of state canvassers and such board shall exercise the duties prescribed in such constitutional provisions. The preparing of a statement of the purpose of any such proposed amendment or question to be designated on the ballots for submission to the electors in not more than 100 words, exclusive of the caption, which said statement shall consist of a true and impartial statement of the purpose of the amendment or question in such language as shall create no prejudice for or against such proposal shall be the duty of the director of elections with the approval of the board of state canvassers.

**History:** 1954, Act 116, Eff. June 1, 1955;—Am. 1963, 2nd Ex. Sess., Act 9, Imd. Eff. Dec. 27, 1963.

**Popular name:** Election Code

**168.474a Assignment of number designation to appear on ballot for question submitted on statewide basis.**

Sec. 474a. (1) The board of state canvassers shall assign a number designation to appear on the ballot for each question to be submitted on a statewide basis. The designation shall be assigned not less than 60 days before the election. If the question is to appear on a general election ballot the designation shall not be assigned earlier than the primary election preceding that general election.

(2) The number designation under subsection (1) shall consist of 3 or 4 digits. The first 2 digits shall be the last 2 digits of the year of the election. The next digit or, if necessary, 2 digits shall indicate the chronological order in which the question was filed to appear on the ballot. For the purposes of this subsection, a question shall be considered to be filed to appear on the ballot as follows:

(a) A general revision of the constitution under section 3 of article XII of the state constitution of 1963 shall be considered to be the first question filed to appear on the ballot for those elections at which a general revision of the constitution will appear on the ballot.

(b) An amendment to the constitution proposed under section 2 of article XII of the state constitution of 1963, legislation initiated under section 9 of article II of the state constitution of 1963, or a referendum invoked under section 9 of article II of the state constitution of 1963 shall be considered to be filed to appear on the ballot when the petition is filed with the secretary of state.

(c) An amendment to the constitution proposed under section 1 of article XII of the state constitution of 1963 shall be considered to be filed to appear on the ballot when the joint resolution proposing the amendment is filed with the secretary of state.

(d) A referendum under section 34 of article IV of the state constitution of 1963 shall be considered to be filed to appear on the ballot when the legislation is filed with the secretary of state.

**History:** Add. 1978, Act 246, Imd. Eff. June 20, 1978;—Am. 1999, Act 219, Eff. Mar. 10, 2000.

**Popular name:** Election Code

**168.475 Filing of petition; notification of board of state canvassers; supplemental filings.**

Sec. 475. (1) Upon the filing of a petition under this chapter, the secretary of state shall immediately notify the board of state canvassers of the filing of the petition. The notification shall be by first-class mail.

(2) After the day on which a petition under this chapter is filed, the secretary of state shall not accept further filings of that petition to supplement the original filing.

**History:** 1954, Act 116, Eff. June 1, 1955;—Am. 1978, Act 338, Imd. Eff. July 11, 1978;—Am. 1999, Act 219, Eff. Mar. 10, 2000.

**Popular name:** Election Code

**168.476 Petitions; canvass by board of state canvassers; use of qualified voter file; hearing upon complaint; investigations; completion date; disposition of challenges; report.**

Sec. 476. (1) Upon receiving notification of the filing of the petitions, the board of state canvassers shall canvass the petitions to ascertain if the petitions have been signed by the requisite number of qualified and registered electors. The qualified voter file shall be used to determine the validity of petition signatures by verifying the registration of signers and the genuineness of signatures on petitions when the qualified voter file contains digitized signatures. If the qualified voter file indicates that, on the date the elector signed the petition, the elector was not registered to vote, there is a rebuttable presumption that the signature is invalid. If the qualified voter file indicates that, on the date the elector signed the petition, the elector was not registered to vote in the city or township designated on the petition, there is a rebuttable presumption that the signature is invalid. If the board is unable to verify the genuineness of a signature on a petition using the digitized signature contained in the qualified voter file, the board may cause any doubtful signatures to be checked against the registration records by the clerk of any political subdivision in which the petitions were circulated, to determine the authenticity of the signatures or to verify the registrations. Upon request, the clerk of any political subdivision shall cooperate fully with the board in determining the validity of doubtful signatures by rechecking the signature against registration records in an expeditious and proper manner.

(2) The board of state canvassers may hold hearings upon any complaints filed or for any purpose considered necessary by the board to conduct investigations of the petitions. To conduct a hearing, the board may issue subpoenas and administer oaths. The board may also adjourn from time to time awaiting receipt of returns from investigations that are being made or for other necessary purposes, but shall complete the canvass at least 2 months before the election at which the proposal is to be submitted.

(3) At least 2 business days before the board of state canvassers meets to make a final determination on challenges to and sufficiency of a petition, the bureau of elections shall make public its staff report concerning

disposition of challenges filed against the petition. Beginning with the receipt of any document from local election officials pursuant to subsection (1), the board of state canvassers shall make that document available to petitioners and challengers on a daily basis.

**History:** 1954, Act 116, Eff. June 1, 1955;—Am. 1999, Act 219, Eff. Mar. 10, 2000;—Am. 2005, Act 71, Eff. Jan. 1, 2007.

**Compiler's note:** Enacting section 4 of Act 71 of 2005 provides:

"Enacting section 4. If any portion of this amendatory act or the application of this amendatory act to any person or circumstances is found invalid by a court, the invalidity shall not affect the remaining portions or applications of this amendatory act that can be given effect without the invalid portion or application, if the remaining portions are not determined by the court to be inoperable, and to this end this amendatory act is declared to be severable."

**Popular name:** Election Code

#### **168.477 Petitions; official declaration of sufficiency or insufficiency by board of state canvassers; publication of statement of purpose, expense; effectiveness of law that is subject of referendum.**

Sec. 477. (1) The board of state canvassers shall make an official declaration of the sufficiency or insufficiency of a petition under this chapter at least 2 months before the election at which the proposal is to be submitted. If the board of state canvassers declares that the petition is sufficient, the secretary of state shall send copies of the statement of purpose of the proposal as approved by the board of state canvassers under section 474 to the several daily and weekly newspapers published in this state, with the request that the newspapers give as wide publicity as possible to the proposed amendment or other question. Publication of any matter by any newspaper under this section shall be without expense or cost to the state of Michigan.

(2) For the purposes of the second paragraph of section 9 of article II of the state constitution of 1963, a law that is the subject of the referendum continues to be effective until the referendum is properly invoked, which occurs when the board of state canvassers makes its official declaration of the sufficiency of the referendum petition. The board of state canvassers shall complete the canvass of a referendum petition within 60 days after the petition is filed with the secretary of state, except that 1 15-day extension may be granted by the secretary of state if necessary to complete the canvass.

**History:** 1954, Act 116, Eff. June 1, 1955;—Am. 1999, Act 219, Eff. Mar. 10, 2000.

**Popular name:** Election Code

#### **168.478 Petitions; notice of approval or rejection by board of state canvassers to persons filing.**

Sec. 478. At the time of filing any such petition, the person or persons filing the same may request a notice of the approval or rejection of said petitions to be forwarded by said board to such person or persons or any other persons so designated at the time of the filing of such petitions. In any case where such a request is made at the time of filing of the petitions, it shall be the duty of the secretary of state, immediately upon the determination thereof, to transmit by registered or certified mail to said person or persons an official notice of the sufficiency or insufficiency of said petitions.

**History:** 1954, Act 116, Eff. June 1, 1955;—Am. 1956, Act 190, Imd. Eff. Apr. 26, 1956.

**Popular name:** Election Code

#### **168.479 Review of determination; mandamus, certiorari or other remedy.**

Sec. 479. Any person or persons, feeling themselves aggrieved by any determination made by said board, may have such determination reviewed by mandamus, certiorari, or other appropriate remedy in the supreme court.

**History:** 1954, Act 116, Eff. June 1, 1955.

**Popular name:** Election Code

#### **168.480 Proposed constitutional amendment or question; certification; copies to voting precincts, posting.**

Sec. 480. Whenever a proposed constitutional amendment or other special question is to be submitted to the electors of the state for a popular vote, the secretary of state shall, not less than 49 days before the election, certify the same to the clerk of each county in the state, together with the form in which such amendment or other special questions shall be submitted. The secretary of state shall also furnish the several county clerks in the state 2 copies of the text of each amendment or question and 2 copies of each said statement for each voting precinct in their respective counties. The county clerk shall furnish the said copies of such statement to the several township and city clerks in his county at the time other supplies for the election are furnished; and each such township or city clerk shall, before the opening of the polls on election

day, deliver the copies of such text and statement to which each voting precinct in his township or city is entitled to the board of election inspectors of said precinct, who shall post the same in conspicuous places in the room where such election is held.

**History:** 1954, Act 116, Eff. June 1, 1955.

**Popular name:** Election Code

#### **168.481 Proposed constitutional amendment or question; form.**

Sec. 481. Whenever any proposed constitutional amendment or other question is to be submitted to the electors, the board of election commissioners of each county shall cause such proposed constitutional amendment or other special question to be printed in accordance with the form submitted by the secretary of state.

**History:** 1954, Act 116, Eff. June 1, 1955.

**Popular name:** Election Code

#### **168.482 Petitions; size; form; contents.**

Sec. 482. (1) Each petition under this section shall be 8-1/2 inches by 14 inches in size.

(2) If the measure to be submitted proposes a constitutional amendment, initiation of legislation, or referendum of legislation, the heading of each part of the petition shall be prepared in the following form and printed in capital letters in 14-point boldfaced type:

INITIATIVE PETITION  
AMENDMENT TO THE CONSTITUTION  
OR  
INITIATION OF LEGISLATION  
OR  
REFERENDUM OF LEGISLATION  
PROPOSED BY INITIATIVE PETITION

(3) The full text of the amendment so proposed shall follow and be printed in 8-point type. If the proposal would alter or abrogate an existing provision of the constitution, the petition shall so state and the provisions to be altered or abrogated shall be inserted, preceded by the words:

"Provisions of existing constitution altered or abrogated by the proposal if adopted."

(4) The following statement shall appear beneath the petition heading:

"We, the undersigned qualified and registered electors,  
residents in the  
city  
township (strike 1) of ..... in the county of .....,  
state of Michigan, respectively petition for (amendment to  
constitution) (initiation of legislation) (referendum of  
legislation) (other appropriate description).".

(5) The following warning shall be printed in 12-point type immediately above the place for signatures, on each part of the petition:

#### **WARNING**

A person who knowingly signs this petition more than once, signs a name other than his or her own, signs when not a qualified and registered elector, or sets opposite his or her signature on a petition, a date other than the actual date the signature was affixed, is violating the provisions of the Michigan election law.

(6) The remainder of the petition form shall be as provided following the warning to electors signing the petition in section 544c(1). In addition, the petition shall comply with the requirements of section 544c(2).

**History:** 1954, Act 116, Eff. June 1, 1955;—Am. 1965, Act 312, Eff. Jan. 1, 1966;—Am. 1993, Act 137, Eff. Jan. 1, 1994;—Am. 1998, Act 142, Eff. Mar. 23, 1999.

**Popular name:** Election Code

#### **168.483, 168.484 Repealed. 1965, Act 312, Eff. Jan. 1, 1966.**

**Compiler's note:** The repealed sections required circulator of petition to affix address below his signature, prohibited circulation in more than one city or township and prescribed penalty for fictitious signing.

**Popular name:** Election Code

#### **168.485 Questions submitted to electors; form.**

Sec. 485. A question submitted to the electors of this state or the electors of a subdivision of this state shall, to the extent that it will not confuse the electorate, be worded so that a "yes" vote will be a vote in favor of the subject matter of the proposal or issue and a "no" vote will be a vote against the subject matter of the

proposal or issue. The question shall be worded so as to apprise the voters of the subject matter of the proposal or issue, but need not be legally precise. The question shall be clearly written using words that have a common everyday meaning to the general public. The language used shall not create prejudice for or against the issue or proposal.

**History:** Add. 1969, Act 152, Eff. Mar. 20, 1970;—Am. 1994, Act 152, Eff. Jan. 1, 1995.

**Popular name:** Election Code

#### **168.486 Certifying and transmitting language of constitutional amendment or legislation initiated by petition.**

Sec. 486. If the qualified electors of this state approve a constitutional amendment or legislation initiated by petition, the board of state canvassers shall certify to the secretary of state the language of the amendment or legislation. The secretary of state shall transmit the language of the amendment or legislation to the director of the department of management and budget.

**History:** Add. 1978, Act 482, Imd. Eff. Nov. 30, 1978.

**Popular name:** Election Code

#### **168.487 Reimbursement to county, city, and township for cost of conducting special election.**

Sec. 487. (1) If a statewide special election is called to submit a proposed constitutional amendment to the electors of this state, this state shall reimburse each county, city, and township for the cost of conducting the special election as provided in this section. The reimbursement shall not exceed the verified account of actual costs of the special election. This state shall reimburse each county, city, and township under this section notwithstanding that the county, city, or township also holds a local special election in conjunction with the statewide special election.

(2) Payment shall be made upon presentation and approval of a verified account of actual costs to the department of treasury, local government audit division, after the department of treasury and the secretary of state agree as to what constitutes valid costs of conducting an election. Reimbursable costs do not include salaries of permanent local officials, the cost of reusable supplies and equipment, or costs attributable to local special elections held in conjunction with the statewide special election.

(3) The legislature shall appropriate from the general fund of this state an amount necessary to implement this section.

(4) To qualify for reimbursement, a county, city, or township shall submit its verified account of actual costs before the expiration of 90 days after the date of the statewide special election. This state shall pay or disapprove all or a portion of the verified account before the expiration of 90 days after this state receives a verified account of actual costs under this subsection.

(5) If this state disapproves all or a portion of a verified account of actual costs under subsection (4), this state shall send a notice of disapproval along with the reasons for the disapproval to the county, city, or township. Upon request of a county, city, or township whose verified account or portion of a verified account was disapproved under this section, this state shall review the disapproved costs with the county, city, or township.

**History:** Add. 1994, Act 181, Imd. Eff. June 20, 1994.

**Popular name:** Election Code

#### **168.488 Applicability of MCL 168.544c and 168.482(1), (4), (5), and (6).**

Sec. 488. (1) Section 544c applies to a nominating petition for an office in a political subdivision under a statute that refers to this section, and to the circulation and signing of the petition.

(2) Section 482(1), (4), (5), and (6) apply to a petition to place a question on the ballot before the electorate of a political subdivision under a statute that refers to this section, and to the circulation and signing of the petition.

(3) A person who violates a provision of this act applicable to a petition pursuant to subsection (1) or (2) is subject to the penalties prescribed for that violation in this act.

**History:** Add. 1998, Act 142, Eff. Mar. 23, 1999.

**Popular name:** Election Code